

CLAIMS:

1. A method for determining a norm for use in assessing normalcy of a patient being examined, comprising the steps of:
 - determining at least one physical characteristic of the patient from the examination;
 - obtaining guidelines relating to the determination of the at least one characteristic from the examination;
 - obtaining information about the patient other than from the examination;
 - obtaining established norms for the at least one characteristic; and
 - selecting one of the established norms to be applied to the patient based on the determination of the at least one characteristic, the guidelines relating to the determination of the at least one characteristic and the information about the patient other than from the examination.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one characteristic is an anatomical feature, further comprising applying the norm to the anatomical feature to obtain a normal value for a measurable anatomical feature or a range of normal values for a measurable anatomical feature and comparing the determined anatomical feature of the patient to the normal value or range of normal values to determine whether the determined anatomical feature is indicative of normalcy of the patient or abnormalcy of the patient.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one characteristic is a ratio of two anatomical features, further comprising applying the norm to the ratio to obtain a normal value for the ratio or a range of normal values for the ratio and comparing a ratio derived from the determined anatomical features of the patient to the derived normal value or range or range of normal values to determine whether the at least one anatomical feature falls is indicative of normalcy of the patient or abnormalcy of the patient.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of performing the examination comprises the step of performing an ultrasound examination of the patient.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein the step of determining the at least one characteristic comprises the step of measuring a length, size or diameter of a bone in the patient or measuring a circumference of a head or abdomen.
6. The method of claim 4, wherein the step of determining the at least one characteristic comprises the steps of measuring at least two anatomical features and

calculating a ratio of two anatomical features, guidelines relating to the ratio of the two anatomical features being obtained.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising expressing the determination of the at least one characteristic in XML syntax.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising expressing the established normal ranges of the at least one characteristic in XML syntax.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the information about the patient other than obtained from the results of the examination is obtained from a hospital or departmental information system using HL7 messaging which uses XML syntax.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the information about the patient is coded in the hospital or departmental information system, further comprising accessing a vocabulary to decode the information about the patient prior to the selection of one of the established norms.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the selection of one of the established norms is performed by an inference engine.

12. A method for determining a norm for use in assessing normalcy of a patient being examined, comprising the steps of:

determining at least one physical characteristic of the patient from the examination;
expressing the determination of the at least one characteristic in XML syntax;

obtaining guidelines relating to the determination of the at least one characteristic from the examination, the guidelines being described using a methods ontology based on semantic web technology;

obtaining information about the patient other than from the examination from a hospital or departmental information system using HL7 messaging which uses XML syntax;

obtaining established norms for the at least one characteristic;
expressing the established normal ranges of the at least one characteristic in XML syntax; and

providing an inference engine to receive the determination of the at least one characteristic, the guidelines relating to the determination of the at least one characteristic and the information about the patient other than from the examination and selecting one of the established norms to be applied to the patient based thereon.

13. A system for determining a norm for use in assessing normalcy of a patient, comprising:

a modality for obtaining physical measurements of a patient and enabling at least physical characteristic of the patient to be derived;

a processor coupled to said modality;

a repository of medical information about the patient coupled to said processor;

at least one library of norms relating to characteristics of the patient coupled to said processor; and

at least one library coupled to said processor and containing clinical guidelines associated with a procedure used by said modality to derive the characteristics; said processor being arranged to receive the characteristics of the patient derived by said modality, medical information about the patient from said repository of medical information, the norms from said at least one library of norms and the clinical guidelines from said at least one library of clinical guidelines and select one of said norms which is most appropriate for use with the patient.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein links between said processor, said repository of medical information, said at least one library of norms and said at least one library of clinical guidelines are Internet or Intranet connections.

15. The system of claim 13, wherein said modality is arranged to express the measurements of the patient and the derived values relating to physical conditions of the patient in XML syntax.

16. The system of claim 13, wherein said repository of medical information about the patient is arranged to remotely communicate with said processor using HL7 messaging using XML syntax.

17. The system of claim 13, wherein said at least one library of norms is arranged to express the norms in XML syntax.

18. The system of claim 13, wherein said at least one library of guidelines is arranged to describe the guidelines using a methods ontology based on semantic web technology.

19. The system of claim 13, wherein said processor is arranged to apply the norm to the measurements obtained by said modality to provide an indication of a normal or abnormal condition.

20. The system of claim 13, wherein said processor is arranged in connection with said modality.